THE RAGTIMER

MAY / JUNE 1973

PUBLISHED BY
THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE
PRESERVATION OF
CLASSICAL RAGTIME

MUSIC FOR SALE

(British Publications)

We have imported a limited quantity of sheet music and folios in sets from the U. K. at premium cost as a service to our members. The following are offered at prices which include our handling charges:

CF-808 RHYTHM IN RAGTIME - This folio contains four rags (Temptation, Hors D'Oeuvres, Dill Pickles and Canadian Capers).
..... $2. 00 postpaid

CF-809-123 THE DIXIELAND NEW ORLEANS, BOOKS 1 to 3 of Blues, Stomps and Ragtime contains eighteen numbers (including Cataract Rag, Hilarity Rag, Grace and Beauty, Climax Rag, M. L. Rag, Weary Blues, Chime Blues and Snag It).
..... $5. 00 per set postpaid

CF-810-12 FATS WALLER'S PIANO CONCEPTIONS, BOOKS 1 & 2 - These folios offer the stride side of Ragtime in the application of stride arrangements by Waller to old favourites. Contains twenty numbers (including ten applied to Scottish tunes and such standards as Dinah, My Honey's Lovin' Arms, Who's Sorry Now?, and Down Home In Tennessee). ..... $3. 00 per set postpaid

CF-811-123 JELLY ROLL MORTON'S BLUES AND STOMPS, BOOKS 1 to 3 - Contains twenty-seven good ones (including King Porter, Wolverine, Jelly Roll Blues, Georgia Swing, Tom Cat Blues, Sweetheart O'Mine, Honey Babe, The Pearls and Midnight Mama). ..... $5. 00 per set postpaid

CM-641 BLAZE AWAY - March Two-Step by Abe Holzmann - 1901
..... $1. 00 postpaid

CM-642 TIGER RAG (by O. D. J. B. - 1917) - a 1935 piano arrangement by T. W. Thurban
..... $1. 00 postpaid

CM-643 WHISTLING RUFUS - a characteristic two-step March by Kerry Mills - 1899.
..... $1. 00 postpaid

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NOTICE OF DELETION FROM JULY 1972 CATALOGUE

RSR-08 - The Music of Joe Jordan by Lois Delano
(See Page 5 - This record is no longer available.)

RAGTIME SOCIETY BINDER @ $2. 50 each postpaid
(See Page 10 - This item is no longer available.)

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RAGTIME . . .

UNDER YOUR HAT

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

is a non - profit corporation having the following objects:

To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

The uninitiated may well ask "What, exactly, is RAGTIME ?"

When you talk about truly classic RAGTIME, or present it as a musical treat to your friends, be prepared to give a considered explanation.

The label of "RAGTIME" is all too often misapplied.

We are pleased to announce the appointment of three new directors to the board of THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. Marjorie Wittman and Mark Wittman were appointed in November last year. William McCrostie joined the board in March of this year. Marjorie is responsible for sheet and folio music sales, Mark is acting as secretary to the board. Bill McCrostie has taken on the role of co-ordinator of the annual "BASH" arrangements. We welcome the added strength and help we are receiving from our new directors.

The 1972-1973 officers are the same as for 1971-1972 with Idamay MacInnes - president, Allen MacInnes - secretary and Jean Cuff - Treasurer. The other directors are currently John Arpin and Jack Cuff.

John Fairhead is now on leave of absence from the board due to sharply increased personal activities associated with his business career. John has been an unstinting worker and loyal supporter of the SOCIETY for many years. He deserves and we extend in your behalf an expression of sincere appreciation to him for his enormous contribution.

Many of our members will be interested in the music offered for sale in this issue which has been brought in from a U. K. source. (See Page 2 of THE RAGTIMER.)

The 9th annual National Ragtime Festival is scheduled for June 13th to 16th inclusive at St. Louis, Missouri. We send greetings and best wishes. Don't tell that Ole' Man River or you might start another overflow in jubilation!

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RAGTIME ... UNDER YOUR HAT Cont'd. from Page 3.

That super star of the ragtime world, Mr. Eubie Blake, continues an active pace that puts the rest of us to shame. Eubie cut piano rolls more than fifty years ago. Now we hear that Ramsay Tick of Q. R. S. at Buffalo, N. Y., in conjunction with Mike Montgomery of Detroit, has arranged to cut some new "Eubie Blake" piano rolls. On May 22nd, Eubie is scheduled to do a "Eubie Blake Concert" for the Yesteryear Museum Concert series at Morristown, N. J. Then on May 27th Eubie is slated to appear with the Boston Pops Orchestra. Arthur Feidler will conduct. We hear too that Eubie has been invited as a special guest to attend the Jazz Festival at Molde in Norway. Eubie also continues to be a frequently invited guest on T. V. talk shows. Then there is that ever expanding record producing business he has developed as a sideline. EBM-4 is the latest, a re-issue of old 78 records. Don't forget too about the time he gave to Bob Kimball and Bill Bolcom in connection with their sparkling new book "REMINISCING WITH SISSLE AND BLAKE" (published by The Viking Press Inc. in the U. S. and by The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited). Finally turn to "SOMETHING DOING" for the news that Eubie will be appearing at the Newport Jazz Festival in July. That man can sure tire you out trying to keep up with him.

Idamay, our president, was recently in touch with Max Morath. In the course of the conversation it was learned from Max that several "goodies" are in prospect. Dover publications has a new book "Favourite Songs of the 90's with an introduction by Max. It contains songs of the era rather than ragtime. Max says that Dover is considering a Rudi Blesh book that will contain rags by Trebor Tichenor. Soft cover reprints by Belwin-Mills of the N. Y. Public Library collected works of Joplin are coming along. Volume I is now available. Jazzology has a new album - "William Bolcom plays his own rags". We hear too that a record is on the way with Bill Albright at the piano. A Simon and Shuster publication is now available at book stores covering a history of popular music called "After The Ball".

A general thank-you is due to the many members who have been sending in material for possible use in THE RAGTIMER.

The State Fair Community College of Sedalia, Missouri is a new member of the SOCIETY. Sedalia has now developed an awareness of its ragtime heritage. We direct your attention to the hard work being done by member Larry Melton as reported in this issue of THE RAGTIMER.

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REMINDER NOTICE

THE 9th ANNUAL RAGTIME SOCIETY BASH - 1973

To be held at the CARA INN
Toronto, on the weekend of
Saturday, October 13, 1973

This will mean three years in a row at the same location - with the general duplication of accommodation.

HAVE YOU RESERVED THE DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR OF "MUST" EVENTS FOR THE FALL SEASON?

SEDALIA, MISSOURI - THE CRADLE OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME - PLANS 1974 SCOTT JOPLIN FESTIVAL

President Jake Siragusa, of the Sedalia Chamber of Commerce, has appointed our SOCIETY member Larry C. Melton to head up a special committee.

Larry writes: "For some time now, I have dreamed of a real production here, where it all began. Nearly everyone I have written to in the field has agreed that it would be most appropriate if such a program were on a scale commensurate with Joplin's current following. I feel we envision such an effort.

In summary we plan a three day festival, named after Joplin and intended to promote classical ragtime through a competition of new undiscovered talent and the performance of established talent. Much of the festival is planned for presentation on or near the original site of the Maple Leaf Club and some kind of appropriate structure is planned. It is intended that this be an annual affair.

We want to include prominent performers who are now actively recording or performing in the classic style. We also want to see if a vocal and dance company can be commissioned to provide some of "Treemonisha". It would certainly be appropriate to see the cakewalk on the same street where it attracted so much attention 75 years ago."

The current revival of interest in the music of Scott Joplin has filtered back to Sedalia and the Atlanta performance of "Tremonisha" was closely followed.

I am in the process of contacting everyone I can think of who would be interested in this project and I naturally began with your organization. I would greatly appreciate suggestions and impressions. This should be a great way to honor a master composer.

MEMBERS OF THE RAGTIME SOCIETY INC. ARE INVITED TO WRITE TO:

Larry C. Melton, Committee Chairman,
The Scott Joplin Festival Committee,
Post Office Box 967,
Sedalia, Missouri 65301,
U. S. A.

Larry will welcome your support and ideas.

The following is taken from publicity material which Larry sent along when he wrote to us in April of this year.

PROPOSED PROGRAM

Title: THE SCOTT JOPLIN FESTIVAL OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME MUSIC

Dates: 25-27 July, 1974

Program: The festival will feature a three day series of activities promoting Scott Joplin and classical ragtime music. Evening performances will be headlined by the foremost entertainers in the field, highlighting in concert, all of the ragtime forms: piano, dance, and opera. Afternoon activities may include exhibitions and informal performances in a pavilion or Maple Leaf Club replica on the original site, stressing interaction of participants and visitors.

Location: Afternoon activities near the Maple Leaf Club site and evening performances indoors.

Reprinted from the Sedalia Democrat April 18, 1973

"The Sedalia Chamber of Commerce soon will investigate the feasibility of holding an international Scott Joplin classical ragtime music festival here.

At a monthly meeting Tuesday afternoon, the Chamber board of directors voted unanimously to undertake the investigation. Jake Siragusa, president, said he would name the committee, probably by Wednesday.

The board's action came after a local teacher and authority on ragtime music, Larry Melton, 1010 East Fifth, said a Scott Joplin festival would "literally draw international and national publicity."

In a written report presented to the board, Melton said if the Chamber decided to take on the project, a formal board of directors could be appointed. This, he said, should lead to the establishment of a legal foundation and the assigning of a full-time agent.

Melton said the original Main Street site of many of the 1890 night clubs which featured ragtime music would be a good location for the festival.

"Such a festival will undoubtedly bring together the foremost personalities in the field, and attract international attention. Thus, Sedalia has the potential to become a cultural center of the nation and the recorded performances will be the standard of excellence in this area of classical music," he said in the report.

Melton emphasized that the formal committee would work out the specific details of any festival.

"This historically located outdoor gala can be projected for July, 1974," he said in his report. "Covering a two or three day period, performers from over the world will be invited to compete, judged by recognized authorities now in the field of classical ragtime. Winners would be highlighted in a final climatic performance featuring appearances of other noted artists."

Reprinted from the Sedalia Democrat April 22, 1973

EXPLORE POTENTIAL OF JOPLIN FESTIVAL

"The Sedalia Chamber of Commerce is to be applauded for taking the first firm steps toward initiating an annual Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival in Sedalia.

On Tuesday the Chamber board approved setting up a steering committee to look into such a festival. It will report back to the board after investigating several angles and the availability of top ragtime artists.

Although several other cities (Atlanta, St. Louis, Texarkana) already have made their bids for Joplin-ragtime fame, Sedalia unquestionably has the best claim. It was here that the young Negro composer did his most creative work in the late 1890's, including "Maple Leaf Rag". Sedalia holds the undisputed title as the real Cradle of Classical

Ragtime.

We have remarked before about the growing revival of interest in ragtime music, and especially Joplin. Since Joplin is important in the literature of both popular and classical music, mingling as he does elements of both in his works, his whole position in the history of American music is being seriously re-evaluated.

As a result of this trend, and because Joplin is synonymous with Sedalia in the minds of ragtime musicians and scholars alike, there should be no difficulty in generating interest in a Sedalia festival. In fact the idea has been suggested before by respected ragtime figures who have wondered why it hasn't been done before now.

This community has been something less than appreciative of its ragtime heritage in the past, sitting by as others have taken the lead. Now it's time to see what can be done to put Scott Joplin on the map where he beongs - in Sedalia.

We will be eagerly awaiting the report of the steering committee and what it recommends for the first Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival."

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RAGTIME REVILED - 1912 VERSION

Folk Music A Reluctantly Urged Substitute

After a dozen years of growing popularity, RAGTIME had become the musical craze of the day; but the fight to suppress it was still being waged.

In 1912 it had become clearly evident, to mature teachers of music, that the pupil or young musician readily acquired an instinctive appreciation for the sprightly verve of RAGTIME. The "misguided" youth of that day, and their parents, were badly in need of help and counsel. What is now an amusing criticism of RAGTIME was brought to our attention, in close succession, by two of RAGTIME'S most popular exponents in the professional field today. They are JOHNNY MADDOX and BOB DARCH respectively. We would like to share their chuckles with you.

The article was specially written by Philip Gordon for the November, 1912 issue of THE MUSICAL OBSERVER of New York. The article reads as follows:

"RAGTIME, THE FOLK SONG
AND THE MUSIC TEACHER

The most perplexing of all dilemmas to the music teacher is his inability to cope with the spread of ragtime among his pupils.

This kind of "music" is as harmful in its way as is the dime novel, and is fully as detrimental to the tastes and tendencies of a young student. It is commonplace, unpoetic, and uninspired, every phrase a viler version of some vile concoction of the month

before. It is as much music as is the rhythmical beating of a hammer on a wooden box. The verses to which ragtime is set are the most hideous trash that ever issued from the pen of man. It is brimful of that "characteristic" of "American music" - the syncopation. It is compounded by a number of hack-composers, and is given in doses of about one new publication every day. Concisely stated, ragtime is an agglomeration of noise that would be tolerated nowhere but in America.

It must be admitted that there are current to-day numerous melodies from the American dramas and light operas, which are both interesting and wholesome. It is here that we must seek for the earmarks of an American school; it is in the melodic and harmonic originality and richness of these airs, in the gushing vein in which they are conceived that we shall find the germs of our own music - the music of a great lyric people. But the hack-men, who consider music a business rather than an art, have already overworked these new tendencies to such a degree that no composer of merit has any desire to help in propagating them. This music, however, is not ragtime. It is not, as yet, worthy to supplant the kind of music we use in teaching, for it has become so tainted as to be rendered useless. This fact is much to be regretted, for, with all due apologies to the value of the music which our magazines give us each month, it is more desirable by far than a goodly proportion of our "teaching pieces."

Let us now consider what can be done to make our teaching material more interesting to the pupil than ragtime, while retaining the qualities of good music - flowing melody, pure harmony, and, above all, poetic thought. We cannot expect an improvement in the music we use now; the magazines are giving us the best they can procure. It is useless to refer to the works which the great composers have left for the young musician, for, a few only excepted, they cannot be comprehended by the young folks nor appreciated by the older ones. The fact cannot be too strongly impressed upon one's mind that parents are often more responsible for the introduction of "rag" into the house than are the pupils themselves.

The demands of parents and friends for a "tune", together with a natural desire on the part of the pupil for something that is catchy and rhythmical, are causing many a promising student to end his career in failure and disappointment. If there be any young musicians among my readers, let them take this warning: Ragtime will ruin your touch, disable your technic, misuse your knowledge of pedaling, and pervert whatever sense of poetry and feeling you have into superficial, improper channels. Shun it as you would the "Black Death".

In spite of all warnings, however, the cause of this evil cannot be removed. We must, therefore, seek to palliate the effect. The author proposes to introduce into teaching music as an antidote to the poisonous effects of ragtime a species of music that has long lain neglected. It is a music that is both interesting and appealing, poetic and pure, helpful and instructive. It is the music that shows to the fullest extent the power of the bard over mankind. The voices of the oppressed have sobbed its phrases, and the throats of the conqueror have proclaimed it. The smiles of youth, the passions of youth, the murmur of love, the rage of hate, the gloom of despair - it reads the thoughts of the heart, and the dungeons of the soul cannot shut it out. It is the gamut of human emotion. The

voice of the people speaks in it, for it is the tale of our life since first life began: it is the FOLK SONG.

It is useless to dilate upon the value of the folksong. Sprung none knows whence, sung by scald and by bard, by wanderer and by husbandman, the music of the people has become the most inspired, the most poetic, the most appealing music that has ever been written.

This is the music which should be added to our teaching curriculum. Those who seek for rhythm will find it in the song of the gypsy; those who desire appealing melodies will find them in the melancholy thoughts of the Russian or the pure lyricism of the Irish. Every nation has its characteristic music, speaking the history of its people. The Spaniard, the Hungarian, the German - everyone has contributed to the store of undying music.

The pupil will not only become acquainted with the peculiarities of each people's music, and will not only add to his repertoire a set of pieces that will warm the heart of the coldest, but will even be spurred on to harder study. For since everyone knows the folk-song, pupils will be urged on to learn it perfectly, they will begin to play expressively and to be inspired by their music, so that they will appreciate the emotions hidden beneath the mask of notes.

And the music teacher will find that in place of the corrupting influence of ragtime, his pupils will become more musical and poetic through the cultivating influence of the folk song."

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LP RECORD NEWS

Our member, Steen Christensen of Denmark, is featured on piano on an LP record titled "A Danish Tribute To Classical Ragtime". We wish to thank Louis Barnewitz for the copy received by the SOCIETY. Steen is accompanied by a rhythm section consisting of washboard, banjo and bass. Steen plays fine piano. The ensemble is called MR. JOE'S RAGTIME GROUP. It is a lively and uninhibited effort - congratulations! There are 15 Rags in all including Maple Leaf, Kismet, Elite Syncopations, Swipsey, Palm Leaf, Felicity, Pineapple, Dill Pickles, Creole Belles, Sensation, Blame It On The Blues, Chatterbox, Georgia Camp Meeting, St. Louis and Harlem. The record LBS1 Stereo can be obtained from Louis Barnewitz, Copenhagen Jazz & Blues Centre, Norrebrogade 186, DK2200, Copenhagen N. Denmark.

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Biograph BLP-1009Q 'James P. Johnson 1917 - Volume 2'

Selections: Steeplechase Rag; After Tonight (two versions); Daintiness Rag; Mama's Blues (two versions); Stop It; When It's Cherry Time In Tokio; Innovation; Caprice Rag (two versions); Carolina Shout; Twilight Rag; Eccentricity; Fascination (piano roll); Fascination (1939 recording).

Biograph BLP 1010Q 'Scott Joplin Ragtime - Volume 3'

Selections: Silver Swan; Rag Medley (Pineapple Rag and Euphonic Sounds); Magnetic Rag; Palm Leaf Rag; Kismet Rag; Wall Street Rag; Scott Joplin's Best Rags (medley of selected strains from six rags); Pleasant Moments; Original Rags; Sunflower Slow Drag; Maple Leaf Rag.

Biograph BLP 1011Q 'Eubie Blake - Blues and Ragtime - Volume 1'

Selections: Charleston Rag; Somebody's Done Me Wrong; Goodnight Angeline; Schubert Gaieties of 1919 (medley of five tunes from the show); Gee, I Wish I Had Someone To Rock Me (In The Cradle Of Love); Broadway Blues; Crazy Blues; Strut Miss Lizzie; Home Again Blues; It's Right Here For You; Fare Thee Honey Blues.

Biograph BLP 1012Q 'Eubie Blake - Blues and Spirituals - Volume 2'

Selections: The Good Fellow Blues; Don't Tell Your Moneky Man; Boll Weevil Blues; If You Don't Want Me Blues; Negro Spirituals; Wang-Wang Blues; Roumania; Memphis Blues; Dangerous Blues; Arkansas Blues; The Down Home Blues.

Biograph BLP 12047 'Black And White Ragtime 1921-1939'

Selections and Artists: Charleston Rag - Eubie Blake; The Harlem Strut - James P. Johnson; Unknown Blues - Fletcher Henderson; Everybody's Rag - Alonzo Yancey; Louisiana Glide - Blind Leroy Garnett; Jimmie Blues - Jimmie Blythe; Mr. Crump's Rag - Jesse Crump; Kitten On The Keys - Zez Confrey; Maple Leaf Rag - Vera Guilaroff; Spring Fever - Rube Bloom; Sailin' Along - Frank Banta; Pianotes - Jean Paques; Knice And Knifty - Willie Eckstein; Original Rags - Jelly Roll Morton.

Eubie Blake Music EBM-2 'Eubie Blake: Rags To Classics'

Selections: Charleston Rag (1971); Charleston Rag (1921); Capricious Harlem; Rustles Of Spring; You're Lucky To Me; You Do Something To Me; Rain Drops; Pork And Beans; Valse Marion; Classical Rag; Scarf Dance; Butterfly; Junk Man Rag.

Eubie Blake Music EBM-3 'Eubie Blake and His Friends, Edith Wilson and Ivan Harold Browning'

Selections: He May Be Your Man (But He Comes To See Me Sometimes); There'll Be Some Changes Made; Black And Blue; Joshua Fit The Battle Of Jericho; Go Down Moses; In That Great Gettin' Up Morning; Exhortation; Shuffle Along Medley; Eubie Dubie; I Can't Get You Out Of My Mind; Memphis Blues; Corner Chestnut and Low; When Day Is Done.

In these seven LPs, we have a real feast for the ragtime gourmet, heavily flavored with the fine ragtime piano playing of Eubie Blake, patriarch of ragtime who turned ninety in February 1973. As these records prove, the vitality and skill in his performances is every bit as evident in his recent issues as in his work of more than a half century ago.

EBM-2, the first of two issues on Eubie's own label, is made up entirely of recently recorded piano solos, except for one reissue (a 1921 take of 'Charleston Rag', included for comparison with the 1971 version) and one track on which Eubie adds a vocal ('You're Lucky To Me'). The LP contains a liberal dose of ragtime, but is basically designed to show the broad range of Eubie's talents as a composer and pianist in several idioms, including light classics, pop songs, and even a waltz. As always, each track is turned in with style, professionalism and showmanship.

Eubie turns accompanist for Side One of EBM-3, playing solid piano that supports the vocalist without detracting from his efforts. Edith Wilson sings the first three tracks, turning in a confident and humorous performance on 'He May Be Your Man'. Ivan Harold Browning takes over for four rousing spirituals and a medley from Eubie's hit show 'Shuffle Along', in which Browning starred. These tracks are uniformly excellent, Browning being in good voice and driving the songs home with plenty of spirit.

Side Two of EBM-3 is all Eubie, with four solos and one vocal-with-piano ('I Can't Get You Out Of My Mind'). Performances range from the rhapsodic and romantic 'When Day Is Done' to an earthy combination of boogie, blues and ragtime that represents the type of music played in the saloons at the corner of Chestnut and Low Streets in Eubie's native Baltimore at the turn of the century. Taken together, these two LPs afford a unique opportunity to hear nearly a century of America's popular music synthesized through the still nimble fingers and fertile imagination of a man who was there through it all. Not to be missed.

Biograph's excellent piano roll series keeps rolling along, to coin a phrase, with four delightful LPs, two of which contain all of the hand-played rolls by Eubie Blake known to be in existence. The performances are mostly song rolls, rather than piano solos, and have been noticeably edited and embellished with extra notes, particularly on 1012Q. Thus, although all of the characteristic Blakeisms are present, the LPs should not be viewed as unadulterated Blake. This is not to say, however, that they are not thoroughly enjoyable, with plenty of hi-fi examples of that full, rich, nostalgic, happy player piano sound.

The Joplin album consists entirely of machine-cut rolls and, not surprisingly, is somewhat ponderous in approach compared to the other three - particularly a long medley roll containing assorted strains of six Joplin rags, in which the right and left hand seem to me to be poorly synchronized. For the most part, however, the magic of Joplin's melodies rises above the machinery; moreover, the LP contains the recently rediscovered roll of

Joplin's 'Silver Swan', which should be enough to recommend the record to serious ragtimers.

For flat-out heat and straight-ahead ragtime, the James P. Johnson is the best of the four, with most of the selections being rags, some of them presented in two piano roll versions. Many of these were designed as piano showcases for the artist, and not for singing along; thus, there is little evident editing of the material, and with the tempos and the pedals in the care of piano roll expert Mike Montgomery, whose informative liner notes on each LP are definitive examples of the esoteric art of liner-note writing, James P. comes to life again on this record.

Ragtime historian and pianist Dave Jasen's excellent reissue compilation 'Black and White Ragtime' provides an appropriate bridge between the ragtime of the piano roll days and today's recordings by Eubie Blake. The presence of fourteen pianists gives the LP a variety and balance that the other LPs, each dedicated to one artist, necessarily lack, making for enjoyable listening. There is a healthy dose of the fleet, precise and difficult 'novelty' school of ragtime, much under-represented on records, in the playing of Confrey, Bloom, Eckstein and the other white pianists, contrasting well with the blues-tinged work of Blythe, and the overall guttier sound of the other Negro performers.

As I said, a ragtime feast, with each LP a first-class effort in its own segment of ragtime. Different ragtimers will find their own particular favorites here, but I like 'em all.

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BOB SEELEY - PIANIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

Jess Sewell, one of our Michigan members sent along a review by Bernard Decker published in THE PRESS of YPSILANTI on February 25, 1973 which emphasizes the well-known point that gifted pianists must still play the kind of music the customers want, depending on the makeup of a particular audience on a particular night. When you want to hear ragtime, boogie or stride piano played well, then a visit with Bob Seeley will allow him to demonstrate. Here is an extract from Bernard Decker's review of Bob's efforts at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge at Orchard Lake in Michigan:

"LISTENING TO LOUNGE PIANIST IS LIKE CLAM DIGGING

Listening to a cocktail lounge pianist is a little like digging for clams: You have to wade through a lot of muck to get at anything worthwhile.

The blame is not the pianist's usually but the audience's. If you were Picasso, how would you like people coming up and asking you to sketch their kitty-kat in crayon? Well, the feeling must be similar for a pianist expert in classic American music who is asked to play "Pretty Baby" or "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" or "I've Been Working on the Railroad" so three 11-year old lassies can squeak along.

One would never know it to watch Bob Seeley. He acts as if it were a privilege to accompany the budding Mrs. Millers.

After having driven some 35 miles or so to hear Seeley, I was not so magnanimous. I was consigning the three young ladies to places a lot warmer than Miami Beach in August as they gobbled up one of Seeley's preciously few sets.

I could think of no place suitable for the gentleman - a term I use in deference to The Press' reputation as a family newspaper - who then decided it was Ted Mack's Amateur Hour. It was bad enough when he had Seeley accompany him in such numbers as "San Francisco" - he did have a passable voice, after all. But when he had the gall to indicate I was to join in on one of the numbers, he really got my Irish up. Only my wife - and the singer's rather large frame - restrained me from telling him exactly where he could deposit his suggestion.

Ah, well, Bob Seeley is more tolerant than I. Of course, he is forced to be by the economics of the situation. A cocktail lounge pianist plays what the patrons want to hear, not what he wants to play. Else he soon will be carrying hods instead of playing cocktail lounge piano.

And that would be everyone's loss in the case of Bob Seeley.

For to hear Seeley play boogie-woogie or ragtime or blues or stride is worth waiting through squeaking young ladies, a gentleman on a singing ego trip - and even a young man blustering to Seeley about the merits of Michel LeGrand. (Someone other than Seeley asked, "Who's she?")

You name it - from Scott Joplin's rags to Meade "Lux" Lewis' boogie-woogies - and he can play it. And talk about it as well.

Seeley has not only learned the music but also the history of the men who made the music. The "Lux" in Meade "Lux" Lewis, for instance, Seeley will tell you, comes from the fact that Lewis - considered by most jazz experts to have been the premier exponent of boogie woogie - was once referred to by a friend as "the Prince of Luxembourg."

In addition to reading about Lewis, Seeley knew him.

A Detroit native and resident, Seeley used to go to Masonic Temple to hear Lewis.

"One night, some friends and I went backstage to get his autograph. We got talking, and he said, "I'm going to a party. Why don't you drop over? We got to the party before he did, and I was sitting there playing one of his numbers I'd learned off his records when he came in." That started a friendship that lasted until Lewis died.

Seeley smiles as he recalls the night. A small-boned man, he reminds one of a jockey. He is almost meticulous in his neatness: carefully combed hair and natty, well-matched clothes - light blue turtleneck jersey, hounds-tooth check sports coat, dark trousers.

He is as meticulous in his approach to his music. Seeley has even written an "Analysis of Musical Stylings of Bob Seeley." In it he explains clearly and cogently just what the various styles are all about.

RAGTIME. - "This style of music introduced syncopation to American music. Syncopation is the placing of strong right hand accents on the weak beats of a measure of music against the steady rhythmic left hand beat."

That will do for this article, but Seeley explains in much more detail, and lists those rags he plays, which include the most famous one of all, Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag."

STRIDE. - "Stride style (also known as Eastern Ragtime, or Harlem Stride, or Shout Style) is best typified by Fats Waller's style of playing. It developed from Ragtime and was the most prevalent piano style of the Roaring '20s. The left hand "strides" back and forth, covering a greater keyboard distance than a strictly Ragtime bass."

Among those he plays are James P. Johnson's "Mule Walk Stomp," "Jelly Roll" Morton's "The Pearls," and "Fats" Waller's "African Ripples."

BOOGIE - "This style was based on the blues progressions, blues scales and idea, and was the Black people's folk music of the 1920's. The style is typified by a rolling bass figure (the motor) against which the right hand improvises blues figures based on blues progressions."

Seeley plays Lewis' famous "Honky Tonk Train Blues," Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson's "The Boogie Man," and such miscellaneous numbers as "Pinetop's Boogie."

He won't commit himself regarding the extent of his repertoire. A peek at a card on his small upright shows one of the titles of more than 200 tunes, broken down into various categories: Waller, Morton; Classic; Blues; Fast-Slow; Fast ...

"It would take three lifetimes to play everybody's music ... You do your own thing."

Seeley considers the music he plays "classical American music."

"It is behind every piece of American music being played today. Gershwin played it ... Rock 'n' roll plays it ..."

Talking about the various forms, Seeley notes that ragtime is "melodic" and "composed," whereas stride is "more rhythmic" and "improvisational." He began using terms like "riffs," which he explains in his writing are "right hand figurations that are repeated over and over."

When he begins talking about blues and boogie, the going gets thicker, with talk of "flatted fifths" and "three chords" and the like.

But, as Louis Armstrong was wont to say, "If you have to ask what is . . ."

The best thing to do is have Seeley play, then you don't care about explanations. You just want to listen and listen and listen.

As a compendium of the various styles, have Seeley play his version of "St. Louis Blues." He includes them all in a wonderfully textured version of the classic. But don't neglect the forms in their pure versions, for instance Meade "Lux" Lewis' "Honky Tonk Train Blues," considered by many the finest of boogie. A man has to have a left wrist of steel to roll that bass, and Seeley has it.

Oh, yes, where does this paragon play? At Charlie's Crab on Pine Lake in Orchard Lake. Don't be lulled, as I was, into expecting a roadside tavern with lots of smoke, booze and clinking glasses. Charley's Crab is a plush restaurant - the first in a long time at which I have had my car parked for me.

It was a difficult combination to beat: good food, good music - and a pleasant atmosphere.

Try it. You'll like it - the food and particularly the playing of Bob Seeley.

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LETTERS

Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies - 6th Annual Conference on Discographical Research, will be held on Saturday, July 7, 1973 at Hickman Hall, Douglass College, New Brunswick, N. J. For more particulars write to:

Walter C. Allen,
P. O. Box 501,
Stanhope, N. J. 07874, U. S. A.

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Enclosed is my 1973 dues - with no piano for 100 miles, and the only electricity being a battery, ragtime is hard to come by out here. But I do have one precious cassette, to keep my spirits up, and it is good to get the Ragtimer and know that the music is flourishing somewhere, if not here.

I think, by the way, the address is new to you. I have now taken up my 'field work' (anthropological psychology) and am no longer in Nairobi. Keep on playing.

Charles Super,
P. O. Box 180,
Sotik, Kenya, Africa.

(Ed. Comment: Perhaps there are other members of the SOCIETY who have a spare cassette of ragtime music that could be put to good use. The full address for Charles is shown above.)

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I enjoy receiving and reading your most interesting newsletters and have been pleased with the records I have so far purchased through the SOCIETY. Thank you very much.

Charles Shallcross,
Elizabeth, N. J., U. S. A.

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"The Tin Pan Alley that destroyed ragtime the first time around, is at it again....

The word "ragtime" sells music these days ... Ragtimers have learned, the hard way, that the word "rag" in the title of a book or song does not necessarily mean anything ... new converts to ragtime can easily be suckered ... A letter of protest to a publisher that is timely, could prevent future abuse."

William Hyder,
Baltimore, Maryland, U. S. A.

(Ed. Comment: While William Hyder's views were expressed with stronger feelings in other parts of his letter, the call for alertness is obvious. It gave us our idea for the message box on the editorial page of this issue of THE RAGTIMER.)

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My wife and I had a <u>great</u> time at the last bash. Mark us down right now for the 9th bash next October. Will be there for sure.

Ralph Grugel,
Cleveland, Ohio, U. S. A.

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It seems to me that the recent issues from the Music Reprint Club have been of marvelous quality. I'm more pleased than ever with them. I look forward to the next chapter.

Peter Turner,
Chesterfield, England.

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Something Doing Cont'd from Opposite Page.

DR. ELI NEWBERGER - and The New Black Eagle Jazz Band at the Stickey Wicket Pub, West Main Street, Hopkinton, Mass. Weds. 7:30 p. m. to 11:30 p. m.

TOM NOEL - on the road with his living portrayal show "Mark Twain At Home".

CHARLIE RASCH - & "Sister Kate" with the Jacktown Jazz Band, at Bill Cones' Downstairs Saloon, Jackson, Mich., Sat. Nights.

ST. LOUIS, MO. - The 9th Annual National Ragtime Festival will be held from June 13 to 16 inclusive.

BOB SEELEY - at Charlie's Crab Restaurant & Lounge, 3230 Pine Lake Rd., Orchard Lake, Mich., Mon. thru Sat.

DAN SUMMERS - and the New Charleston Chasers (with the ODJB sound), Whirlpool St. at Cleveland Avenue, Niagara Falls, N. Y., Fri. & Sat. Nights.

TREBOR TICHENOR - and the Saint Louis Ragtimers can be heard on The Goldenrod Showboat in St. Louis, Missouri.

TERRY WALDO - at Deibel's Restaurant, German Village, Columbus, Ohio, Wed. & Thurs. Nights.

TEX WYNDHAM - and The Red Lion Jazz Band, appearing regularly, at The Surry Restaurant, 1100 Philadelphia Pike, Wilmington, Del.

PERFORMERS: Please keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN - in the Odyssey Lounge at the top of the Hyatt Regency, Toronto, 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m.

EUBIE BLAKE - at the Newport Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall, N. Y. C. July 7

BOB DURST - "RAJAH OF RAGTIME" at Northern Hotel, Billings, Montana, May 7 to June 30. At Ramada Inn, Casper, Wyoming, July 2 to July 15.

DON EWELL - at the Moonraker Club, Oakland Park Blvd. (near the ocean) Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with Andy Bartha.

DAVE FLOWITT - at the Brunswick Hotel, 481 Bloor St. W., with the Climax Jazz Band, Wed. 9:00 p. m. to 1:00 a. m. at Grossman's Tavern, 379 Spadina Ave., with Dr. MacJazz band, Thurs. 8:30 p. m. to 12:30 a. m.

JIM KAPLAN - at the Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois on Tues., Fri. and Sundays.

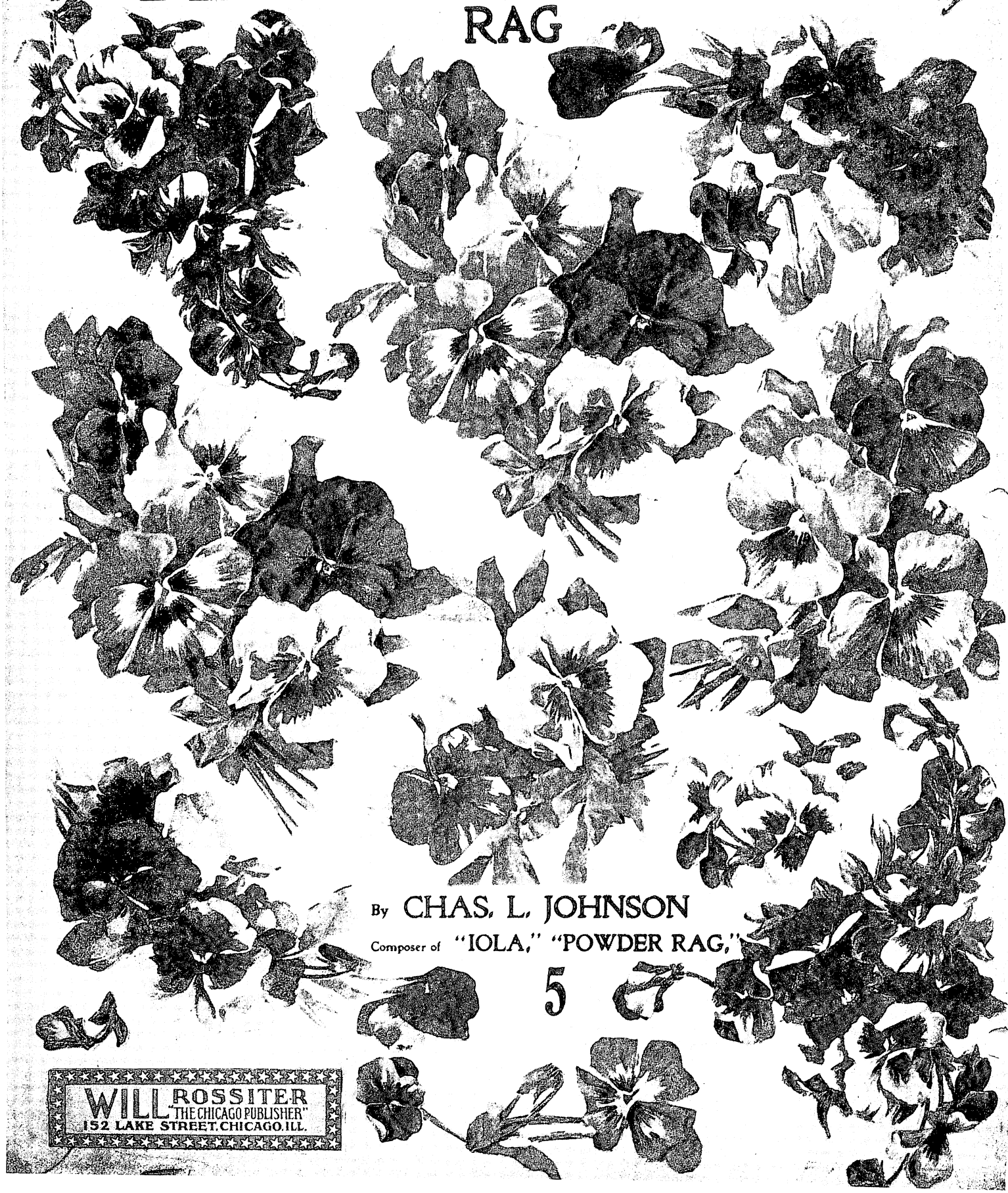
JOHN MADDOX - at Cherry Creek Inn, Denver, Col., Sept. 3 to Sept. 22.

MIKE MONTGOMERY - at The Dakota Inn, Rathskeller, Detroit, Mich., Fri. nights.

MAX MORATH - on the road with his show "At The Turn Of The Century".

PANSY BLOSSOMS

RAG



By CHAS. L. JOHNSON

Composer of "IOLA," "POWDER RAG,"

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